

AMERICANS ARE NOT BUYING THE
"CHICKEN LITTLE" STORY OF
THE DEMOCRATS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WELDON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I have been here 9 years, my third term, and I take great pride in working in a bipartisanship manner on a number of issues. On the Committee on National Security on defense; on environmental issues, through the GLOBE organization; on energy issues; labor issues; and issues affecting working people as well as natural and man-made disasters, reaching out to both sides of the aisle to reach common consensus.

Mr. Speaker, after listening to what I heard for this past hour, and what I heard last night, I have to change the tone of my speech tonight. I would hope perhaps that some of my colleagues who are rushing out the doors will stick around for 5 minutes to hear what I have to say.

We have heard the story about Chicken Little, that the sky is falling. We heard that from the Democrats when they said, under Ronald Reagan, that Republicans were going to end the Social Security system. We heard that from the Democrats and from the President when we announced our child nutrition program, and they were proven wrong again. And then we heard the same argument from the Democrats on the student aid debate, and then we found that there are, in fact, no cuts being proposed for student aid.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we are hearing the same tired, worn out arguments on Medicare. Mr. Speaker, even senior Democrats nationally understand what is going on here. Let me quote, for instance, Democratic Mayor of Chicago, Bill Daley. He recently told *The New York Times*, and I quote Democrat Mayor Daley, "The only message we have got is the same one we had in November: The Republicans are going to cut Social Security and Medicare. People look at it and say, Forget it. We do not buy that. The sky is not falling."

Mr. Speaker, this is Democrat Mayor Bill Daley of Chicago saying that this is nothing more than the same old tired message attempting to scare people. The same thing we heard against seniors 4 years ago, against students and kids earlier this year. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the people of America are listening to what we are doing and they are responding in overwhelming numbers.

Let me give you some facts and statistics, and I will be happy to provide them to any of our colleagues who would like to come forth and ask for them. Since the Democratic convention in New York City 3 years ago, the Democrat party has lost a total of 685 Senators, House Members, Governors, State Senators and Representatives. That is 685 in just 3 years.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, last Friday, September 15, in Vice President GORE's home State of Tennessee, 2 Democrat Senators switched parties. Senator Milton Hamilton, Jr., and Rusty Crowe. When they switched to the Republican Party, they turned the Tennessee State Senate Republican for the first time since Reconstruction.

Now, is this an exception? Mr. Speaker, since Bill Clinton took office, 132 publicly elected officials have switched parties. Zero have switched from Republican to Democrat, and yet 132 have switched from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. None have switched the other way.

In fact, 37 Members of Congress who were Democrats since Bill Clinton took office have either resigned or announced their retirements to date, and more will follow.

Another five, 2 U.S. Senators and 3 House Representatives, have switched to the Republican Party. An average of almost 1 Democrat U.S. Senator per month since Bill Clinton took office has either retired, resigned, or switched parties.

Mr. Speaker the American people are listening and when we get beyond the Beltway, the breeze that is blowing across America is unbelievable. The American people are seeing beyond the type of demagoguery and rhetoric that we heard tonight and last night on the House Floor.

In fact, in Georgia just 2 weeks ago, the first female district attorney switched parties. Lone rising star in Georgia, Cheryl Fisher Custer, switched to the Republican party. She said, "There is a growing sentiment in this country that there must be a fundamental change in government. I believe that the Republican party offers the best opportunity to effect that change and bring about responsible, common sense government."

Custer was the seventh Georgia Democrat elected official to switch to the Republican Party this year alone.

Let us go beyond. It is not just the South, Mr. Speaker. Let us go up to Maine and look what happened in Maine back in August. Maine Representative Edgar Wheeler switched parties. He became the 113th Democrat to switch since Bill Clinton took office.

Mr. Speaker, this is what he said: "For several years, I have felt out of tune with the Democratic Party, and during my first year as a legislator I recognized how far apart I really am from the party."

Mr. Speaker, all across America, beyond the Beltway, the people are speaking loud and clear. They are rejecting the Chicken Little story of the Democrats and they are understanding what we are doing and that is bringing some common sense back to this hallowed.

TOPICS OF IMPORT REGARDING
REFORMS IN CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from Washington [Mrs. SMITH] is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mrs. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I yield 10 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. GREENWOOD].

MEDICARE REFORM

Mr. GREENWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding and I will not take much of the time that she has reserved.

The gentlewoman may know, I was back in my office and some of my colleagues from the Democratic Party took to the floor and began to give such a tirade of incredibly breath-taking misinformation about Medicare reform, that since I am one of the 8 members of the Republican task force drafting the new plan, I felt compelled to come over here and set things straight. My friends would not yield me much time, and so I appreciate the gentlewoman doing so.

Number 1 thing that our colleagues from the other side of the aisle did not want to go into very much is the fact that the trustees of the Medicare program, part A, and those trustees include three Members of President Clinton's cabinet, issued a report back in the early part of this year. That report indicated that Medicare, part A, is in trouble.

The program is paid for by payroll taxes and this year, fortunately, we have more than enough funds to pay for that program. But next year we start to spend more than we take in, and in 7 years there is no money to pay senior citizen health care costs at all. The program goes broke.

We cannot let that happen. The President of the United States has agreed with that and, of course, what the other side did not mention at all is that President Clinton has suggested, has recommended in his budget document that in fact we need to do something about the outrageous, unsustainable inflationary rates in our Medicare program.

Medicare costs are going up by 10 and 11 and 12 percent a year, and there is no need for that. In the private sector, health care costs have all but leveled off. And if we continue to waste money in Medicare by continuing to have those 10 and 11 and 12 percent increases, we are foolish and we are wasting the taxpayers' money and we are doing nothing that values our senior citizens.

So what are we going to do? We are going to try to work together in a bipartisan fashion and here is what we are going to try to do. It is really quite simple. Our plan will ensure that every single senior citizen in America on Medicare, as well as those who are disabled, will have the option to stay exactly where they are. They will continue to receive what is called fee-for-service health care.

Mr. Speaker, that means they can go to the doctor of their choice when they choose and Medicare will pay all their